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Senate

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Lael Brainard, of the District of Columbia, to be Vice Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for a term of four years.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

(Ms. HIRONO assumed the Chair.)

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING LORENZO CERVANTES

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, last week, America and Illinois lost a hero. Lorenzo Cervantes was his name. He had been a steelworker living in the small town of Sterling, IL, in the Rock River Valley. That is an hour or two west of Chicago.

Mr. Cervantes was 98 years old. When he was a young man, he set out to save the world. He joined the U.S. Army in February of 1943, during World War II, before he had reached the age of 20. He was a member of an elite group. There was an American-Canadian commando unit known as the First Special Service Force, a top-secret band of brothers operating deep behind enemy lines.

The Forcemen, as they were known, earned the nickname "The Devil's Brigade" from terrified Nazi soldiers and officers who said that they seemed to appear out of nowhere in the dead of night, like devils.

That unit he served in suffered one of the highest casualty rates in the war. Listen to these figures. Of the 2,400 men who fought with the unit, 2,300 of them were either killed or wounded, but they never lost a mission—not one.

The First Special Service Force existed for only 2 years, but the spirit of that force lives on in the Green Berets, Army Rangers, Navy SEALs, Marine Raiders, Canadian Special Operations Regiment, and, frankly, all of today's military Special Forces.

For decades after World War II, the very existence of that unit remained top secret and classified. The Forcemen didn't tell anyone what they had done in the war, not even their families. Like Lorenzo Cervantes, they quietly returned home, married, raised families, and lived ordinary lives.

In 2015, some 70 years after the end of World War II, they were finally honored for their service, and Congress awarded them the Congressional Gold Medal.

I had the privilege of meeting two other Forcemen from Illinois at that Gold Medal ceremony. Casey Celske was one of them. He fought with the Devil's Brigade at the Battle of Anzio—one of the Allies' greatest surprise victories. He was among the first Allied soldiers to enter Rome and liberate it from the Nazis.

Mr. Celske died 3 years ago, also age 98. After the war, he had returned to Illinois and married. He and his wife had 11 children—11.

In 1995, 50 years after the war ended, Mr. Celske and one of his sons decided to go back to Europe to take a look and see the places where the First Special Service Force had fought and to visit the towns that the Force liberated.

Near the Anzio beachhead, they spoke to an Italian man. When the man realized who they were, he dropped to his knees, broke out in tears, and thanked Casey Celske of Illinois.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, whose kingdom is everlasting and power infinite, thank You for the exemplary life and legacy of former Senator Orrin Hatch.

Lord, I am personally grateful for his friendship, integrity, and faithfulness. I cherish the many conversations we had each morning before he convened the Senate and invited me to pray. He blessed us by striving to do Your will. Lord, he consistently upheld the standards of excellence, civility, and accountability.

Inspired by this long and consequential life, may our lawmakers seek to faithfully and obediently honor You.

And, Lord, we continue to intercede for Ukraine.

We pray in Your sovereign Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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The Italian man said to his son: This is one of the soldiers who saved our village.

Casey Celske turned to his son and said: All these years, I wondered what I was doing. Now I know.

UKRAINE

Madam President, after World War II, the United States and the leading free nations of Europe worked together to create a new system of rules and institutions to guard the peace of World War II and to reduce the risk in Europe that we would ever again descend into the hell of war. The most important of these new institutions was called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization—NATO. Among its most important new rules was the commitment that nations must never again wage wars of conquest against their neighbors. For more than 75 years, the new rules and institutions largely helped keep the peace in Europe, but then came Ukraine.

With its barbaric attack on Ukraine, Russia is waging war not only against a sovereign nation—an innocent, unprovoked nation—Russia is attacking the very system of democracy and rules-based order for which 400,000 U.S. servicemembers died in World War II and many more have given their lives since.

Vladimir Putin is seeking to restore some mythical Russian Empire. He wants to demolish NATO, and he wants to drag the world back into a blood-soaked past, when Kings and tyrants waged wars of conquest to expand their territory and fill their coffers.

As Russia's barbaric, blood-thirsty war against Ukraine enters its third month, it is clear that Vladimir Putin has miscalculated disastrously. He thought his forces were so overwhelming that he would occupy Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, in a matter of days; that he would remove Volodymyr Zelenskyy from power in Ukraine and that he would install a puppet government that would once again take orders from Moscow.

Instead, Kyiv still stands, Zelenskyy is still in control, and Vladimir Putin has been frustrated by the determination, courage, and resiliency of the Ukrainian troops. He has suffered heavy losses. Russia has lost the battle for Ukraine to date. Vladimir Zelenskyy is still Ukraine's President, and Russian forces are demoralized and depleted.

Instead of seizing Kyiv and all of Ukraine, Russia is now regrouping to try to pick one region that they can conquer, the Donbas region—which they have illegally occupied since 2014—and to seize the Black Sea Port of Mariupol.

Russia's economy is increasingly staggering under the weight of some of the most powerful sanctions ever levied against any nation in the history of the world. The effect of these sanctions against Russia will become even more onerous in the months ahead as Russia is unable to buy parts and equipment

to keep its basic industries thriving and other key sectors of its economy functioning.

The sanctions also target the oligarchs, the kleptocrats, Putin's fraternity who helped prop up his corrupt regime. They are losing their super-yachts— isn't that a heartbreaker—their vacation dachas, and some are starting to lose their lives—strangely, a fate that seems to befall a number of people who get close to Russia's KGB thug who happens to be the leader in Russia today.

The Russian Government has given up any pretense it once had after the breakup of the Soviet Union of ever becoming a democracy. I say that with some sadness for the people of Russia. They have been relegated to the role of pawns in Putin's escapade.

A new censorship law has taken effect. It makes it a crime punishable by up to 15 years in prison to even describe the invasion of Ukraine as a "war" or to describe Russia's assault on Ukraine in honest terms. You can go to prison for that in Mr. Putin's Russia.

It was just a few weeks ago that I met upstairs in my office with a Russian journalist and opposition leader. His name is Vladimir Kara-Murza. Mr. Kara-Murza is fearless. He survived poisoning attempts by the Kremlin twice. He told me several weeks ago, "I'm going back."

I said, "Why?"

He said, "There is work to be done."

He told me about his opposition to Russia's war in Ukraine, the increasing opposition to the war with Russia, and his hopes that some day Russia will be a part of the community of democracies. Well, Mr. Kara-Murza went back to Moscow, and last week, he was arrested—the same day CNN broadcast an interview in which he called Putin's government "a regime of murderers." Mr. Kara-Murza faces years of imprisonment for simply telling the truth.

Senator MARCO RUBIO of Florida and I are going to introduce a bipartisan resolution this week calling for Mr. Kara-Murza's immediate release. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join us.

Vladimir Putin also badly miscalculated the unity of NATO and the will of free people to defend democracy. Instead of shattering NATO, Putin has strengthened NATO. Finland and Sweden, longtime neutral nations, could soon join NATO. Germany is pursuing a historic dramatic overhaul of its approach to security and defense. And yesterday, French voters re-elected their President, Emmanuel Macron, decisively, choosing him over his far-right Putin sympathizer, Marine Le Pen. That election in France marked the first time in 20 years that French voters have given a President a second term. It is widely viewed as, among other things, a vote of support for NATO and Ukraine and against Putin and his Russian aggression.

Vladimir Putin also gambled that America would be too weak and divided

to oppose Russia's assault on Ukraine. He was badly mistaken again. Republicans and Democrats are standing together in support of Ukraine, as are the American people.

President Biden's leadership has been critical in uniting NATO and the West and enabling Ukraine to defend itself. Yesterday, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin traveled to Kyiv and met with President Zelenskyy personally to show Putin and the world that the United States of America stands with the Ukrainian people in their heroic defense of their homeland.

The U.S. is providing Ukraine with the military equipment to defend itself, but it takes the courage and determination of those men and women in Ukraine to make it work. In the last 2 months alone, America has committed to Ukraine an unprecedented \$3.7 billion in military equipment, including howitzers, helicopters, ammunition, tactical drones, and more. Ukraine's Armed Forces are using this equipment and performing brilliantly.

The coming weeks will be difficult, and they may be decisive. In concentrating its assault on the Donbas, Russia is moving the war from cities like Kyiv and Kharkiv to a more wide-open landscape where its heavy artillery seems to have an advantage. In addition, many intelligence reports suggest that Putin is desperate for something he can call a military win by May 8, which Russia celebrates as "Victory Day," marking the Allies' defeat over Nazi Germany in World War II.

The tragic irony is that in this war, Russia is using many of the same tactics used in World War II: attacking a peaceful neighboring nation, intentionally targeting civilians, and committing heinous war crimes.

This Senate voted unanimously last month to condemn Vladimir Putin as a war criminal. We must continue to stand with Ukraine and for democracy and for the rules of civilization where so many Americans fought for and died in World War II and since.

I started these comments on the floor this afternoon remembering a World War II vet in Illinois that just passed away at the age of 98, Lorenzo Cervantes. I have spoken to so many of those vets and said: What were you fighting for?

And they said: We were fighting for our buddies right next to us. We were going to bring each other home safe, so we kept the fight. And we were fighting for our families. We believed our family name was at stake, and the courage we showed reflected on them. And we also were fighting for our nation, the United States, which we were proud to serve and risk our lives for. But most of all, we were fighting to make sure our kids didn't have to do the same. We were willing to sacrifice, even give our lives, so our kids could live in a peaceful world.

Well, for almost 80 years that was a fact after World War II and the service